

January 23, 1952

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Dear Tracy:

Thank you for your letter of the 21st, with its appraisal of Miss Byers. I don't know yet what our space situation will be next year- that is, whether it would be a matter of a vacancy that ought to be filled, or a matter of making room for an unusual student. Space relief was delayed beyond all pessimistic expectations, and I want to see our group a little more happily implanted before making too many more commitments. We have been rather miserable this year, and have had to be especially apologetic to Skaar for the facilities he has had to occupy. I should like to reserve further comments on your letter to the meeting, but thought to write you know about that program. Since we stand at adjacent positions, it might be useful for each of us to apprise the other of our plan.

I can state mine very simply. As far as I'm concerned, my title "Microbial Genetics in relation to cancer" is a misnomer, and Andervont is aware of it. I expect to say practically nothing about cancer, and particularly nothing of my own speculations on it. I thought that I would say that microorganisms have provided the material for investigations of general biological interest. Under this heading, I thought I would discuss a) the concept of the microbial culture as a population of related individuals, and the experimental basis of our ideas about mutation and selection; b) the biological unity that is reflected in the similarity of genetic mechanisms; and c) by way of some disharmonies, the quite incredible systems of genetic exchange like the pneumococcus transformation and our Salmonella transductions. It should not be necessary to make an explicit point that, for example, the human organism is also a population of clonally related cells, or the bearing that transductions might have on the "virus" transmission of autonomous growth habit. Someone should do that sort of thing, and I hoped that your specialties would be so much more pertinent to cancer than mine that analogies, if any, could be more appropriately phrased in the context of your discussion. Let us know if there is any adjustment that either of us can make that will facilitate a neat organization of the program at Cincinnati.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg